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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 090567

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING: MALI

¶1. The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risk of travel to Mali and that Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) may use the Islamic month of Ramadan as an opportunity to conduct further attacks against Americans and other foreign nationals. Faith-based organizations, regardless of location, may be particularly targeted. The Department of State also continues to recommend against all travel to the north of the country due to the kidnapping threats against Westerners. This replaces the Travel Warning for Mali dated June 2, 2009, to update security and threat information.

¶2. As noted in the Department of State's Worldwide Caution dated July 29, 2009, the Islamic extremist group Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been designated as a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union, and has declared its intention to attack Western targets. AQIM has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of two Canadian diplomats in Niger in December 2008, the kidnapping of four European tourists in January 2009 on the Mali-Niger border, the murder of a British hostage in Mali in June 2009, the murder of an American citizen in Mauritania in June 2009, and, most recently, the suicide-bombing of the French Embassy in Mauritania on August 8, 2009.

¶3. In addition to threats posed by AQIM and potential hostage takers, confrontations between the Malian military and Tuareg rebel groups occurred in Nampala along Mali's frontier with Mauritania in December 2008 and in the region of Kidal in January 2009. The threat posed by AQIM, continued Tuareg unrest, sporadic banditry, and the porous nature of Mali's northern borders with Algeria, Niger, and Mauritania all reinforce longstanding security concerns affecting travel to

northern Mali.

¶4. The Department of State notes that the U.S. Embassy in Bamako has designated northern regions of Mali as "restricted without prior authorization" for purposes of travel by U.S. Government employees, contractors, grantees and their dependents. Prior to traveling to these areas U.S. Government employees in Mali are required to have the written approval of the U.S. Ambassador to Mali. This designation is based on the presence of AQIM as well as Tuareg rebel activity. This restriction does not apply to travelers not associated with the U.S. Government, but should be taken into account when planning travel. The restriction is in effect for the following areas:

The region of Kidal;
Areas north and east of the town of Gao, including along the road to Ansongo;
Timbuktu and all points further north.

¶5. All U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Mali are urged to register with the Department of State or the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By registering, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at ACI 2000 at Rue 243, Porte 297. The Embassy's mailing address is B.P. 34, Bamako, Mali. The telephone number is (223) 2070-2300. The consular fax number is (223) 2070-2340. The Embassy webpage is <http://mali.usembassy.gov>.

¶6. Updated information on travel and security in Mali may be obtained from the Department of State by

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calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside of the United States and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Mali and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶7. Minimize considered.
CLINTON